

and into
the dressing room.

I didn't go
in.
I had a cup of water
from the cooler
and
sat on the bench.

Toby the batboy
came over.
"what happened, Mr.
Quinn?" he asked
me.

"our 2nd baseman is
dead, Toby."

"who you going to play
there now?"

"I don't think that's
important," I told
him.

"yes, it is, Mr. Quinn.
we're 2 games out of
first place
going into September."

I got up and went down
the dugout steps
toward the locker room.
Toby followed me.

FOOLING MARIE

he met her at the quarterhorse races, a strawberry
blonde with thin hips, yet well-bosomed; long legs,
pointed nose, flower mouth, dressed in a pink dress,
wearing white high-heeled shoes.
she began asking him various questions about the
horses while looking up at him with her pale blue
eyes ... as if he were a god.

he suggested the bar and they had a drink, then
watched the next race together.
he hit twenty win on a six-to-one shot and she
jumped up and down gleefully.
then she stopped jumping and whispered in his ear:
"you're magic, I want to fuck you!"
he grinned and said, "I'd like to, but when?
Marie ... my wife ... has me timed down to the
minute."
she laughed: "We'll go to a motel, you fool!"

so they cashed the ticket, went out to parking,
got into her car ... "I'll drive you back when
we're finished," she smiled.

they found a motel about a mile and one half
west, she parked, they got out, went in, signed in
for room 302.
they had stopped for a bottle of Jack Daniels
on the way and he took the glasses out of the
cellophane as she undressed, poured two.

she had a marvelous body and sat on the edge of the bed sipping at the Jack Daniels as he undressed feeling awkward and fat and old but also feeling lucky: his best day at the track.

he too sat on the edge of the bed with his Jack Daniels and then she reached over and grabbed him between the legs, got it, bent over and kissed it.

he pulled her under the covers and they played. finally, he mounted her and it was great, it was the miracle of the universe but it ended, and when she went to the bathroom he poured two more Jack Daniels, thinking, I'll shower real good, Marie will never know.

I'll finish the day off at the track, just like normal.

she came out and they sat in bed drinking the Jack Daniels and making small talk.

"I'm going to shower now," he told her, getting up.

"I'll be out soon."

"o.k., cutie," she told him.

he soaped up good in the shower washing all the perfume-smell, the woman-smell, the sperm-smell away.

"hurry up, daddy!" he heard her say.

"I won't be long, baby!" he yelled from under the shower.

he got out, towelled off good, then opened the bathroom door and stepped out.

the motel room was empty.
she was gone.

on some impulse he ran to the closet, pulled the door open: nothing but coat hangers.

then he noticed that his clothes were gone: his underwear, his shirt, his pants with car keys and wallet, his shoes, his stockings, everything.

on another impulse he looked under the bed:
nothing.

then he noticed the bottle of Jack Daniels, half full, on the dresser.

he walked over and poured a drink.

as he did he noticed a word scrawled on the dresser mirror in pink lipstick: SUCKER!

he drank the drink, put the glass down and saw himself in the mirror, very fat, very old.
he had no idea of what to do.

he carried the Jack Daniels back to the bed, sat down, lifted the bottle and sucked at it as the light from the boulevard came in through the blinds.
he looked out and watched the cars, passing back and forth.

HEMINGWAY'S SHADOW

I met the famous writer but he had walked into all the traps: the talk shows, the monstrous book advances: "I got a million for the last, have spent it, haven't written a page ..."

now he was making a book into a screenplay, he was in ever-debt

grinding along to keep from going under to what he owed wives, publishers, Hollywood.

he still lived well, fed well

but he was not writing very well anymore -- in fact, badly

but as a person I liked him, he was a grey little bull but

balanced -- neither bitter nor ranting nor vindictive.

his generous calmness and fine blue eyes were quite damned appealing.

he spoke well and with good sense in spite of sometimes going on so long that he chewed it to death he

was

likeable, he had simply gotten his ass trapped in so many obvious traps and there was no backing out --

just more typing and more typing and more books and more talk shows and more movies.

he was no quitter, he was doing what he could in a game where the odds had swallowed him; lesser men would have panicked and broken.

yet his charm too was part of his trap: people may like you but the typewriter is totally impartial.